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## 200.01 Introduction

**Part 2** covers Transportation Planning as practiced in Washington State by WSDOT and other transportation planning agencies, and environmental considerations in Transportation Planning. It covers the legal and policy framework for Transportation Planning (and Project Scoping and Programming) and WSDOT's role in developing various transportation studies and plans. These include a variety of studies and plans for highways and ferries and other modes; local, metropolitan, and regional transportation plans; and the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP). The WTP includes system plans for all components of the state's transportation system that are owned by the state or in which the state has an interest. Additional information on transportation planning may be found at the WSDOT Transportation Planning Office web site:



<http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/ppsc/planning/>

## 200.02 Process Overview

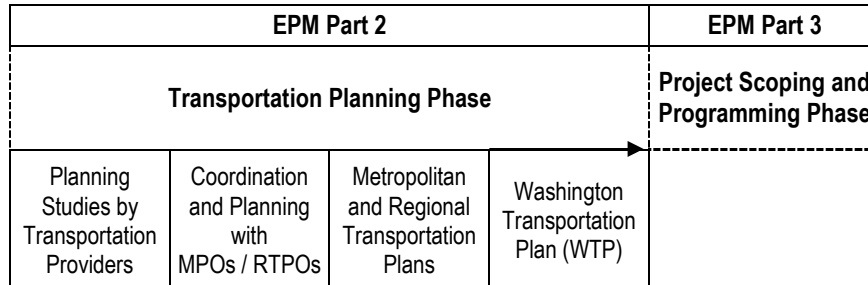
Transportation Planning is the first phase of the WSDOT Transportation Decision-Making Process. **Figure 200-1** shows the relationship between Transportation Planning and the subsequent Project Scoping and Programming phase. **Figure 200-2** shows the state's overall Transportation Planning process, where the state's transportation providers, including WSDOT, coordinate on various transportation studies and then cooperate within the Metropolitan and Regional Transportation Planning Organizations (MPOs and RTPOs) that they belong to, to develop metropolitan and regional transportation plans, which in turn become a basis for parts of the WTP. During this process, WSDOT and other transportation providers conduct studies and develop plans to identify existing and future transportation needs and deficiencies, assess options, and propose policy, project, and/or program solutions to address these needs and deficiencies. Local government planning may include work on the transportation element of their comprehensive plans. WSDOT planning includes

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\* Web sites and navigation referenced in this chapter are subject to change. For the most current links, please refer to the online version of the EPM, available through the ESO home page: <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/environment/>

analyzing data on system condition and performance and preparing planning studies, some of which may not be concluded until the end of the Design and Environmental Review phase of the WSDOT Transportation Decision-Making Process (see [Chapter 220](#)).

**Figure 200-1: Transportation Planning Phase**

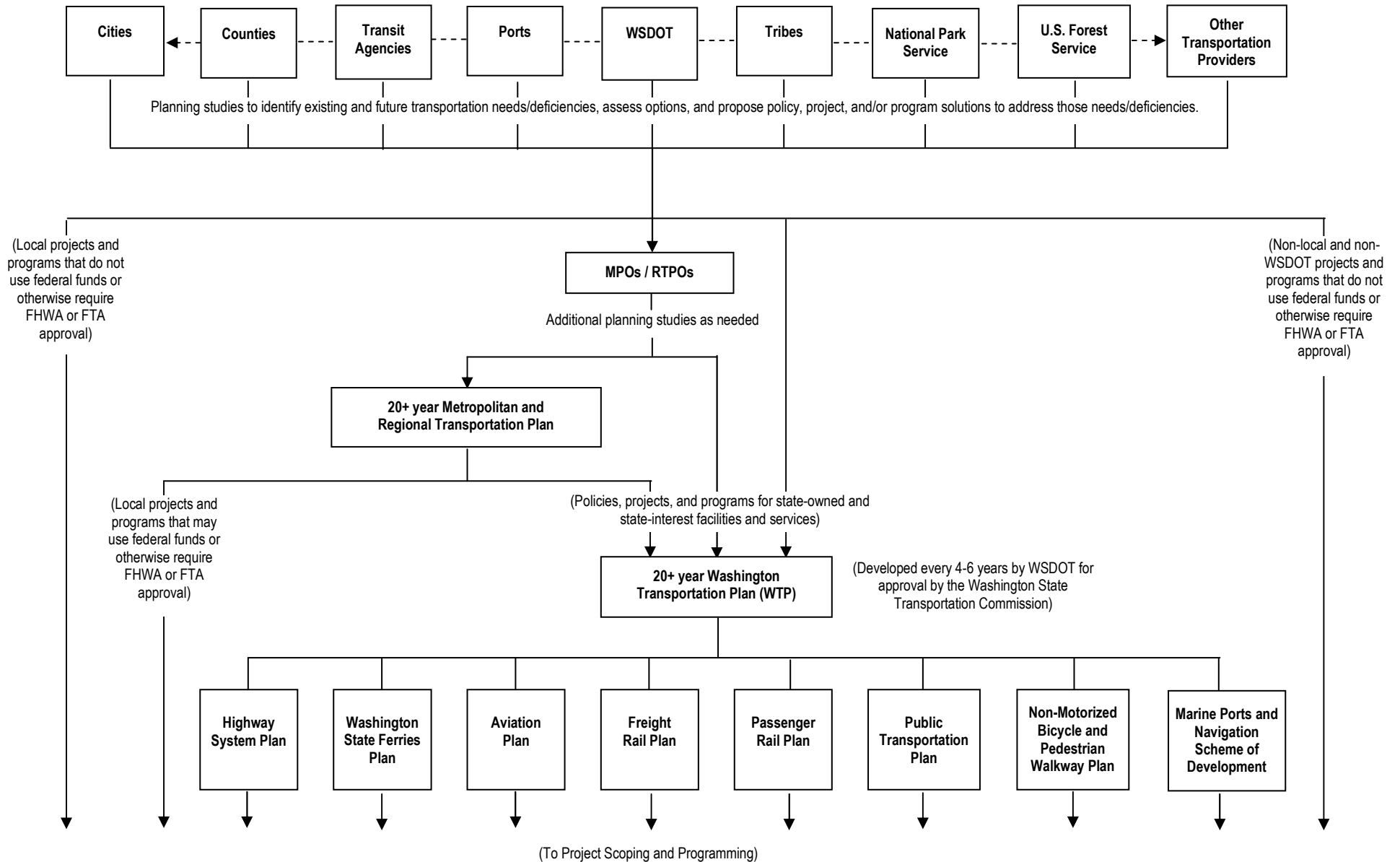


Then, as required by federal and state statutes, transportation providers work within the appropriate Metropolitan and/or Regional Transportation Planning Organizations to ensure that MPO and RTPO plans include all appropriate solutions for addressing local and state-owned and state-interest transportation facility and service needs that can potentially be implemented in the next 20-plus years. Finally, these solutions are incorporated into the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP), either directly or by incorporation into various component system plans that are adopted by reference in the WTP. The WTP, which is updated every four to six years, also includes any other policies, projects, and/or programs that may be needed in the next 20-plus years to address other deficiencies in state-owned and state-interest transportation facilities and services, including highways, ferries, aviation, freight and passenger rail, and public transit.

## 200.03 Organization of Part 2

Following this overview of Transportation Planning, [Chapter 210](#) describes the legal and policy framework for transportation planning, which includes federal and state statutes and Washington Transportation Commission policy. [Chapter 220](#) describes various types of transportation planning studies produced by WSDOT. [Chapter 230](#) describes how the transportation element of local comprehensive plans and metropolitan and regional transportation plans are developed and how they relate to state transportation planning efforts. [Chapter 240](#) discusses the Washington Transportation Plan (WTP) and its component system plans.

**Figure 200-2: Transportation Planning in Washington State**



## 200.04 Environmental Considerations in Transportation Planning

In Transportation Planning, it is both possible and appropriate to begin considering the environmental consequences of any policy, project, and/or program for addressing transportation deficiencies. However, such consideration is not expected to be at the same level of detail as may be required by NEPA and SEPA for actions taken after Project Scoping and Programming. Conceptual planning of proposals that have not yet been approved, adopted, or funded is “categorically exempt” (from the detailed environmental impact analysis requirements of SEPA) as “Information collection and research” under Ecology’s SEPA Rules (WAC 197-11-800(17)).

### (1) ***Early Consideration of Environmental Consequences***

WSDOT considers the environmental consequences of proposed solutions evaluated in its plans and studies and encourages other planning agencies to do the same. It may even be appropriate to rule out certain solutions that would meet the stated transportation objectives, but at an unacceptable or higher level of environmental degradation than other choices, especially if the results of a reasonable environmental degradation comparison can be documented. WAC 197-11-070 prohibits any action that would limit the choice of “reasonable alternatives” until after completion of the SEPA process. However, WAC 197-11-786 defines a “reasonable alternative” as “an action that could feasibly attain or approximate a proposal’s objectives, but at a lower environmental cost or decreased level of environmental degradation.”

### (2) ***Use of Environmental Information***

A lot of environmental information, such as population and land use projection data, is typically collected and analyzed in the transportation planning process, and WSDOT maintains a GIS (Geographic Information System) “Workbench” and other sources of environmental data that can be used to identify and document potentially affected environmental resources. This information can then be used to identify opportunities to avoid or minimize environmental impacts of any alternative transportation solutions being considered, and potentially eliminate alternatives with unacceptable or greater environmental consequences. Also, for the statewide multi-modal transportation plan (WTP), RCW 47.06.040 directs WSDOT to identify and document potential affected environmental resources in coordination with relevant regulatory agencies, including local governments, and give the agencies an opportunity to review the environmental resource documentation.

For information on how to access the GIS Workbench, see:

 <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/environment/envinfo/default.htm>

For a list of current data sets, see WSDOT’s web site:

 <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/>

Click on Maps & Data, then GIS Data Distribution Catalog


Or by direct link:

 <http://www.wsdot.wa.gov/mapsdata/geodatacatalog/default.htm>

### (3) **Documentation**

Environmental information and/or analyses used in the planning process, and environmental impact avoidance or minimization actions taken, should be thoroughly documented. This allows the information to be used again, or incorporated as evidence of mitigation, to expedite environmental review and permitting during the Design and Environmental Review and Environmental Permitting and PS&E phases of the WSDOT Transportation Decision-Making Process.

For guidance on how information, analyses, and products from the transportation planning process can be incorporated into the NEPA process under existing statutes and regulations, please see the following web site:

 <http://nepa.fhwa.dot.gov/ReNepa/ReNepa.nsf/0/9fd918150ac2449685256fb10050726c?OpenDocument>

## **200.05 Abbreviations and Acronyms**

Following are the key abbreviations and acronyms used in **Part 2**. Others are found in the general list in **Appendix A**.

CAA	Clean Air Act
CAFM	Computer Aided Facility Management
CAPP	County Arterial Preservation Program
CRAB	County Road Administration Board
FHWA	Federal Highway Administration
FAA	Federal Aviation Administration
FTA	Federal Transit Administration
GMA	Growth Management Act
HSP	Highway System Plan
MPO	Metropolitan Planning Organization
NEPA	National Environmental Policy Act
RAP	Rural Arterial Program
RDP	Route Development Plan
RTPO	Regional Transportation Planning Organization
SAFETEA-LU	Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users
SEPA	State Environmental Policy Act
SFTA	Strategic Freight Transportation Analysis
SIP	State Implementation Plan
STB	Surface Transportation Board
STIP	Statewide Transportation Improvement Program
TEA-21	Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (PL 105-178), as amended by the TEA-21 Restoration Act of July 22, 1998
TIP	Transportation Improvement Program
WTP	Washington Transportation Plan

## **200.06 Glossary**

See **Appendix B** for a general glossary of terms used in the EPM.

## **200.07 Exhibits**

None.